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illusion of establishing at once a republic. Let her rather slowly prepare for that form of government which is the ultimate object of all the European revolutions. To adopt such a government at present would be, in our opinion, only to retard its permanent establishment; for we firmly believe that there is but one country in Europe — and for that very reason, she is less disposed than any other to adopt the name of that which she already possesses to a considerable extent — where republican institutions would not in a very short time degenerate into despotism.

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### ART. X.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. *Poems*, by JOHN G. WHITTIER. Illustrated by H. Billings. Boston: B. B. Mussey & Co. 1849. 8vo. pp. 384.
2. *Poems*, by WILLIAM THOMPSON BACON. Cambridge: George Nichols. 1848. 12mo. pp. 275.
3. *The Vision of Sir Launfal*. By JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL. Cambridge: George Nichols. 1848. 12mo. pp. 27.

OUR readers may well think, that to the publication of poems there is no end. We have already reviewed three volumes of them in this number, and from at least a dozen more, which lie upon our table, we have selected three others, the titles of which are given above, for such brief notice as the very limited space remaining to us will permit. It would be hardly fair to say, that our selection was determined chiefly by the elegance of their mechanical execution, though we may justly pride ourselves on the appearance, in this country, of such finished specimens of the typographical art and the binder's skill. This beautiful exterior is somewhat significant of the purpose which the publishers, not the authors, of them had in view in placing them before the public; buyers, not readers, of them are wanted. Pretty gift-books are in demand at this season, as presents for Christmas and the New Year; volumes of poetry are quite as suitable as splendid fans, lacquered boxes, and bronze ornaments, *to be given away*. It is rather humiliating for the pride of literature, that books should come into demand chiefly as ornaments for the centre-table, where they are to be looked at, not read. But we are thankful for the growth of any taste in the community which operates, however indirectly, for the encouragement of letters; and in the deluge of

rhyme which is now pouring over the land, this is perhaps the best use that can be made of newly coined poetry.

Mr. Whittier's volume includes very little that had not previously appeared in print; but as many of his pieces had deservedly become great favorites with the public, we are glad to have a full collection of them in a very sumptuous form, with illustrations, which do not, indeed, much illustrate the text, but which are very finely engraved and pleasant to look upon. The characteristics of Mr. Whittier's poetry are sufficiently known; he has a great flow of language, and a power of narrating with much spirit, coupled with an earnestness of feeling which appears in his lyrics as a devouring flame. Quaker as he is, his heart swells within him at the sight of injustice and wrong, and he pours out his indignation in verses which sometimes savor more strongly of earthly passion than of divine inspiration. His excellences are fervor and copiousness, his dangers are extravagance and bathos.

Though strongly inclined to think well of Mr. Bacon, we cannot say much for his poetry. His rhymes are smooth, his language is generally correct, the opinions which he expresses are sound and manly, and his sentiments are amiable; but his verses show little grace, and are wholly wanting in originality, fancy, and imagination. They are simply tolerable prose tortured into intolerable rhyme or very blank verse. As a proof, we will quote one of his Spenserian stanzas (page 71), in which we have not altered a word, but have simply changed the collocation of a few phrases.

“ And yet, earth's first nations were in some things models for us — they had great energy; they put forth this to dare the loftiest heights, and those they reached; and, with eagle eye staring upon the sun in the upper sky, they did maintain them, — they seemed like to gods; — we wonder at their might and majesty, we wonder at the light that streamed from them, as bright as some sun is, which fancy has dreamed of.”

We are inclined to take back a portion of our remark; this is not even tolerable prose. But as this is certainly one of his worst stanzas, we will add in fairness what seems to us one of his best.

“ O, for the dreams of the youthful mind !  
 O, for the thoughts that then  
 Danced like the waves, flew like the light,  
 Beyond e'en an angel's ken !  
 O, for the magic power that caught  
 The light from heaven's burning throne,  
 And flung it over this lovely world,  
 Till like heaven's own orb it shone ! ” — p. 114.

Judging from the frequency of his publications, Mr. Lowell

seems to be aiming after the praise of copiousness and versatility as a poet. There is obvious danger in such a course, but we will not quarrel with him for taking it, if it leads to other essays as striking and brilliant as this delightful "Vision." Its merits are quite equal to its brevity, which is certainly remarkable, for the whole might be printed in one column of a newspaper, though, by the aid of half-titles, blank pages, and other typographical devices, it is made to fill a tiny volume. There is something in the chime of the versification and the turn of the imagery which reminds one strongly of Coleridge's *Christabel*, though the imitation is not marked; and we do not think it would suffer at all by comparison with that wildly beautiful poem. This is high praise, and if we were writing an article, we should be tempted to justify it by transferring the whole contents of the book to our pages; as it is, our readers must be content with a very brief specimen.

"Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;  
 Every thing is happy now,  
     Every thing is upward striving;  
 'T is as easy now for the heart to be true  
 As for grass to be green or skies to be blue, —  
 'T is the natural way of living:  
 Who knows whither the clouds have fled?  
     In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;  
 And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,  
     The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;  
 The soul partakes the season's youth,  
     And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe  
 Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,  
     Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.  
 What wonder if Sir Launfal now  
 Remembered the keeping of his vow?" — p. 7.

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#### ERRATA.

Page 46, 3d line from the bottom, for "1707" read "1727."

" " 9th " " " for "keeping" read "heaping."

" 52, 3d line from the top, for "art" read "wit."

" 75, 14th line from the bottom, for "were" read "inhere."

" 58. The sentence beginning at the 14th line from the bottom should read thus: — "A bookseller, who had heard of his talent for epistolary composition, especially in assuming the position and feelings of others, induced him to prepare a book of letters," &c.